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DEC 08 2008

Appl. No. 10/539,895
Reply to Office Action of August 8, 2008
Attorney Docket 18064

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims:

1. (currently amended) In a road grader having a rear frame including left and right longitudinal beams, each having a rear end, and providing for the components or subassemblies of a rear counterweight, lights and a bumper, the improvement comprising:

the bumper and the rear counterweight having a first and second configuration and ~~are~~ comprised of a first or a second ~~[[a]]~~ generally flat elongate rear end plate having opposing outer end regions and extending across the entire width of the grader;

in a first configuration the first rear end plate exhibits a small wall thickness in use and is connected to the grader in combination with a rear-mounted piece of equipment of a high weight and ~~[[or]]~~ in a second configuration the second rear end plate exhibits a greater wall thickness than the wall thickness of the first rear end plate and is connected to the grader in combination in use with a rear-mounted piece of equipment of a ~~[[low]]~~ lower weight than the piece of equipment of the first configuration or without any rear-mounted equipment, such that an axle-load ~~distribution of the grader is generally maintained;~~

the rear end plate viewed in the direction of travel of the grader constitutes the rearmost part of the rear frame; and

~~backup/brake and flasher lights are built into openings in the rear end plate~~

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~~positioned in the outer end regions.~~

2. (original) The improvement of claim 1, wherein:
the rear end plate is formed as one piece.
3. (original) The improvement of claim 2, wherein:
the rear ends of the left longitudinal beam and the right longitudinal beam are joined
to a rear transverse beam.
4. (original) The improvement of claim 3, wherein:
the rear end plate is removably attached to the rear transverse beam.
5. (original) The improvement of claim 1, wherein:
the rear ends of the left longitudinal beam and the right longitudinal beam are joined
to a rear transverse beam.
6. (canceled) The improvement of claim 2, wherein:
the rear ends of the left longitudinal beam and the right longitudinal beam are
joined to a rear transverse beam.
7. (canceled) The improvement of claim 3, wherein:
the rear end plate is removably attached to the rear transverse beam.
8. (currently amended) A road grader comprising:

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a wheel-supported main frame having a front end and an opposing rear end as determined by the normal direction of travel, the main frame comprised of joined front and rear frames;

an engine and a driver's cab supported on said main frame;

a vertically adjustable ground-engaging blade supported by said main frame;

the rear frame having left and right longitudinal beams generally parallel and in the general same horizontal plane, each with a rear end;

a generally flat elongate rear end plate jointed to the rear end of each of the right and left longitudinal beams; the rear end plate constituting the rearmost part of the rear frame and extending generally the width of the road grader;

the rear end plate having openings therethrough along a bottom edge of the plate to allow rear-mounted equipment to pass from a position below the plate through a lower portion of the rear end plate.

9 (original) The road grader of claim 8, wherein:
the rear end plate is formed as one piece.

10. (original) The road grader of claim 9, wherein:
the rear end plate is removably attached to the rear transverse beam.

11. (original) The road grader of claim 8, wherein:
the rear end plate has opposing outer end portions and openings through the outer end portions and backup/brake and flasher lights are fitted therein.

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12 (original) The road grader of claim 11, wherein:

the rear end plate is made of heavy gauge steel.

13. (currently amended) The road grader of claim 8, wherein:

the grader has a first and second counterweight configuration, in the first configuration the rear end plate has a first weight and exhibits a small wall thickness and attached to the grader in combination in use with a first rear-mounted piece of equipment of a high weight [[or]] and the second configuration wherein the rear end plate is replaced by an auxiliary end plate that exhibits a greater wall thickness than the rear end plate and attached to the grader in combination in use with a second rear-mounted piece of equipment of a [[low]] lower weight than the first rear-mounted equipment or without any rear-mounted equipment to achieve an improved axle load distribution.

14. (new) A method for maintaining an improved axle load distribution between front wheels and an axle of a road grader having a rear frame including left and right longitudinal beams, each having a rear end, a bumper and counterweight of the grader comprising a generally flat elongate end plate extending across the width of the grader and connected to the rear end of the longitudinal beams, the steps comprising:

removing a first rear end plate having a first weight and first wall thickness from an end of the grader;

attaching a rear mounted piece of equipment to the end of the grader; and

attaching a second end plate having a second weight less than the first weight

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and a second thickness less than the first wall thickness to the end of the grader